

5.12 Urban Fire Hazard

A major urban fire hazard event has been determined to have a **Medium** likelihood of occurrence in Benton County within the five-year planning cycle of this Plan. Therefore, although some hazard characterization information is presented below, no further risk assessment has been performed for this hazard. Additional analyses to further characterize the risks of this hazard and the development of suitable mitigation action items will be conducted in the future based on periodic reviews of this hazard mitigation plan and available resources

5.12.1 Nature of the Hazard

Benton County is susceptible to both urban fires and wildfires. An urban fire is one involving a structure or property within an urban or developed area. For the purposes of this Plan, urban fires are hereby defined as major fires affecting (or with the potential to affect) multiple properties. Wildfires are addressed in Section 4.2.

Historical Events

There have been no major urban fires in Benton County in recent history.

Characteristics of the Hazard

The potential for a major urban fire exists in the cities of Prosser and Kennewick. In the Prosser business area, the lack of sprinkler or fire detection systems and the close proximity of buildings increase the potential for a major fire. The city of Kennewick has the same potential in the downtown business area. In addition, the many apartment complexes pose a potential for a large fire. The effects of a major fire can range from minor to significant property damage, and/or loss of life. Businesses may be destroyed, and people displaced.

5.12.2 Hazard Assessment

Hazard Identification

To be determined.

Vulnerability Assessment

To be determined.

Risk Analysis

To be determined.

5.12.3 Community Concerns

Current Conditions

There are local concerns that budget constraints that lead to reduced personnel in full-time fire departments and the possible unavailability of volunteers could cause delays in providing adequate response to major fires.

Public education is necessary to reduce the loss of life and property due to carelessness and ignorance of fire safety and response.

Ongoing Mitigation

Mutual aid agreements serve to counteract the effects of reduced staffing and possible unavailability of volunteers. Mutual aid agreements for the east end of Benton County exist between the cities of Kennewick, Richland, Pasco, and Benton County Fire Districts No. 1, No. 2 and No. 4, Franklin County Fire District No. 3, Walla Walla County Fire District No. 5 and the Hanford Fire Department. Mutual aid agreements for the west end of Benton County exist between Benton County Fire Districts No. 2, No. 3, No. 5, and No. 6, Yakima County Fire District No. 5 and Klickitat County Fire District No. 10.

Insurance incentives and city and county building and fire codes encourage, and in many cases require, the use of materials and design standards that reduce the potential risk of fire. Fire detection and/or sprinkler systems are more common in new buildings than older ones.

Water systems in the cities, including Prosser and Kennewick, are sufficient to address most large fires in residential areas and the majority of commercial/industrial areas.

5.12.4 Mitigation Strategies

To be determined.

5.12.5 Resources

State Resources

To be determined.

Federal Resources

To be determined.

Other Resources

To be determined.